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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the impact of a staff development program on the performance of principals in one of their most important tasks: the annual evaluation of teachers. The objective was to determine whether the effects of the staff development training could be seen in the quality of documentation provided by the principals in their annual review of teachers whom they found to be "unsatisfactory." The data source consisted of a random sample of personnel files of teachers who had been rated "unsatisfactory." Analyses of the results indicated that the quality of documentation improved over the years and that principals were doing more observations. Other findings reported that documentation was more detailed, improvement suggestions were richer, and instructional terminology was being used. Nearly all the records determined classroom organization to be the single most prominent weakness. Appended are 10 references, 4 figure graphs, and 5 data tables. (SI)

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EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF A STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:

ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTATION IN PERSONNEL RECORDS

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Evaluating the Impact of A Staff Development Program: ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTATION IN PERSONNEL RECORDS

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Introduction

Much has been written on the essential qualities of effective building principals. Effective principals have clear, informed visions of what they want their schools to become. They translate these visions into goals for their schools and expectations for their teachers, students and other administrators. They establish school climates that support progress towards these goals and expectations. They continuously monitor progress and intervene in a supportive and corrective manner when this seems necessary (Cotton and Savard , 1980; Persell and Crookson, 1982 and Stow and Manatt, 1982). Because many principals need to learn how to do these things, i.e., how to be more effective, staff development programs initiated by school districts often include a set of activities aimed specifically at principals.

There has been a great deal of emphasis placed in recent years on staff development, but few studies of its impact on performance. Those few studies which have been conducted have focused on teacher behaviors and student achievement that may have changed as a function of a district wide school improvement effort. Although principals always take part in the staff development program, and are seen as essential players in any school improvement effort, there have been very few evaluations of the impact of a staff development program on the performance of principals of their assigned tasks. The literature on the effective principal focuses on the role of the principal as an instructional leader and on the consultative role the principal can play in assisting teachers to improve their performance. But principals are required, by state regulation, to evaluate the teachers in their buildings and to provide documentation when such evaluations earn a teacher a less than *Satisfactory* rating. This study explores the usefulness of a unique set of data, the documentation provided by principals to accompany their teacher evaluations, as indicators of the impact of an inservice program on the performance of principals of their jobs. The study is useful not only in its contribution to the literature on the effectiveness of inservice training of administrators, but also for plowing new ground in evaluation strategy. Therefore the purpose of this research was to evaluate the impact of one such staff development program on the performance of principals in one of their most important tasks: the annual evaluation of teachers. The objective was to determine whether the effects of the staff development training could be seen in a change in the quality of documentation provided by principals in their annual review of teachers whom they found to be *Unsatisfactory* .

Perspective

One of the responsibilities of the building principal has always been to evaluate teachers. Staff development efforts designed to help principals to be more effective often focus on increasing their competence in observing instruction, diagnosing teaching strategies and improving classroom methodologies or instructional effectiveness. Principals learn that infrequent summative evaluations of teachers are often superficial and not helpful in improving teacher performance; they learn to implement formative, participatory, diagnostic evaluations of classroom teaching so that teacher and principal can get at real needs and develop real processes for change and growth. They learn models of teaching and how to recognize these models in classroom observations. They learn that data collection and documentation are important to the process of formative evaluation -- and their observation notes form the basis for discussions with

teachers about teaching. But, training in formative evaluation does not remove from the principal the responsibility for summative evaluation. True, the drop in pupil enrollment throughout many districts has reduced the number of probationary teachers and increased the percentage of older, tenured faculty in schools. Yet there are teachers who are still incompetent. Once principals are trained in the formative evaluation of classroom instructional processes, they should be able to recognize these teachers more easily, provide both helpful feedback to them in a concerted effort to improve their competence, and document their inadequacies to sustain a judgement of incompetence (DeBevoize, 1984; Howell, 1985; Lippitt, Langseth and Mossop, 1985; and Mangieri and Arnn, 1985).

This study was designed to evaluate the impact of a staff development program which focused on teaching principals instructional leadership skills through an analysis of the documentation they provided in dossiers of teachers they rated as *Unsatisfactory* . If principals were getting better in instructional leadership and learning what was being taught them in the staff development program, it was likely to be reflected in the language used to describe teacher instructional and management behaviors, in the quality of the observation notes, and in the nature of the recommendations for improvement. Further, improvements in instructional leadership might lead to an increase in the number of observations undertaken by principals as they try to influence teacher behavior, and the documentation of these observations might also reveal a consistent focus over time. By reviewing documentation in personnel files (dossiers) of *Unsatisfactory* teachers for a period of years before the implementation of the staff development program for principals, then for several years after the inservice training had been underway, the researchers sought to identify whether the impact of the training could be seen in changes in the quality and quantity of documentation provided by principals to support their ratings. Therefore the issue addressed in this investigation was whether the impact of the a staff development program on Principal's behavior can be seen in changes in the numbers rated Unsatisfactory or Below Average over the last ten years, or in changes in the quality and quantity of the documentation provided by Principals to support an Unsatisfactory rating.

Pilot Investigation

Two sources of data were made available to the investigators to explore the feasibility of utilizing data on the numbers of teachers rated as Unsatisfactory each year as well as the documentation available in Personnel files of teachers rated Unsatisfactory as evidence of the impact of training on Principals. First, Personnel staff provided rough estimates of the numbers of Unsatisfactory and Below Average ratings of teachers per school year from 1977-78 to 1986-87. Second, seven records of teachers who were given Unsatisfactory ratings, were drawn at random, two each from 1976-77 and 1980-81 and three from 1985-86. These records were purged of all identifying information by clerical staff (a very time consuming task) in the Personnel Office and made available to the investigators.

Preliminary Impressions

1) The numbers of Unsatisfactory ratings have remained fairly stable over the last 10 years (approximately 20 per year), although there appears to have been a substantial increase in the number of Below Average ratings beginning in 1983-84 (from an average of 6-10 per year from '78 to '83, to an average of 14-16 per year in '84 to '86).

2) Principals are not doing *more* observations of teachers who end up with Unsatisfactory ratings than they did before, but the more recent documentation is more detailed, makes use of staff development terminology to describe instructional problems, and is much richer in suggestions for improvement.

From the preliminary examination the following questions were generated and they served as the guide for the major study.

What percentage of the teaching force has been rated Unsatisfactory each year?

How many of the Unsatisfactories are challenged in hearings each year?

Has that changed over ten years?

What proportion of Unsatisfactories end in dismissals? Has it changed over ten years?

Has the focus of the documentation changed over the years from managerial to instructional?

Have the numbers of observations done by Principals to document an Unsatisfactory teacher change over ten years?

Is the instructional documentation critical, or ancillary, to the development of an Unsatisfactory dossier?

Have the rates of favorably held grievances changed over the past ten years?

Have the bases for grievances and arbitration changed?

Description of the Staff Development Program

Staff development in this district was organized to introduce a shared professional language and a system-wide approach to classroom instruction, improve classroom instruction, support instructional leadership, develop a process for personnel evaluation, and stimulate professional growth (Mensinger, 1986).

All teachers and administrators in the school district participated in the staff development program. During the first year principals and supervisors received 30 hours of training that included an "update in the principles of effective teaching, observation skills, analysis and feedback skills. During and after the training period administrators observed, held conferences and taught staff development concepts to teachers" (Stoeckinger, 1984).

In 1982-83 the principals and supervisors, with the help of a small group of teachers, trained other teachers. By the end of the 1982-83 school year, all personnel had been exposed to the staff development concepts. The focus was on "knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are prerequisite to effective educational leadership" (Wallace et al, 1984).

The third phase, a center for secondary school teachers, provided a clinical experience for all high school teachers in the district. The purpose was to give each teacher the opportunity "(1) to observe instructional activities in a real setting; (2) to practice new skills and techniques; (3) to receive feedback on that practice; (4) to translate theory into practice; and (5) to recieve an update in their specific subject matter areas, latest research finding in effective teaching technology, and appropriate areas in psychology" (Wallace et al, 1984). Centers at the middle and elementary schools were to follow the development of the secondary school center. District personnel are presently engaged in center activities.

Methods and Data Source

The data source for this study consisted of a random sample (44 of 109) of personnel files of teachers who have been rated as *Unsatisfactory* from a school district in Western Pennsylvania. (Personnel files of teachers who were rated as *Satisfactory* were not reviewed because principals are not required to file documentation to support the *Satisfactory* rating). A staff development program for principals was initiated in this school district in 1981-82 as part of a concerted long term school improvement effort. Beginning with the 1977-78 school year (five

years before the implementation of the staff development program) and continuing to 1987-88 (six years after the initiation of the principal's staff development program), 50% or no more than five personnel file records were selected for review from each year. Records were selected at random by the principal investigator from a list of all those rated unsatisfactory in each of 11 school years. The researcher reviewed the documentation in 44 personnel file folders that included all the records of the teachers as well as the documentation of the *Unsatisfactory* rating.

The principal investigator made notations on the following items: employment history of each teacher reviewed; number of observations documented in the dossier and the administrative role of the documenter for each observation; instructional and managerial problems noted in each observation and frequency of notations of each type of instructional or managerial problem across all observations; number and types of recommendations made for improving teacher performance for each observation; presence of consistent 'themes' across any two consecutive observations in documentation of teacher performance or in recommendations made; presence of staff development 'terminology' in the documentation; and presence of 'critical incidents' that warrent an *Unsatisfactory* rating even without additional documentation on instructional effectiveness. Then the researcher organized the information from his notes using the above categories and developed a summary for each of eleven years. This summary described the nature of the *Unsatisfactory* ratings by years.

Data from the 44 personnel files were analyzed to determine whether the focus of the documentation by principals had changed over the eleven year period and whether the timing of these changes coincided with the implementation of the staff development program; whether the numbers of observations done by principals to document *Unsatisfactory* ratings had changed over the eleven year period; whether the quantity and substance of recommendations had changed; whether there were more consistent 'themes' running through consecutive documentations in more recent dossiers; and, whether the instructional documentation provided in the dossiers was essential to developing the case for each *Unsatisfactory* rating or was actually ancillary because of the presence of critical incidents that in and of themselves warranted the*Unsatisfactory* ratings.

Findings

1. The number of teachers rated unsatisfactory increased from 0.21% of the teaching force during 1972-82 to 0.47% of the teaching force during 1983-88; in fact, the numbers have actually doubled (see Figure 1).

2. Of the teachers who were rated unsatisfactory during 1978-82, 30% are still teaching in the district. Of the teachers who were rated unsatisfactory during 1983-87, 46% are still teaching. This difference may be due to the longer period of time that the teachers in the 1978-82 category have had to reach or approach retirement age (see Table 1).

3. The number of teachers rated unsatisfactory who resigned or retired between 1978-82 (11) and 1983-88 (11) remained the same. However, the teachers who resigned or retired in the 1983-88 category did so much closer to the time of the unsatisfactory rating (i.e., within one or two years). This suggests that, more recently, a greater effort has been made to move unsatisfactory teachers out of the system during this time period (see Table 2).

4. Most teachers do not grieve the unsatisfactory ratings that they receive. Only 15% of grievances of unsatisfactory ratings filed between 1983 and 1988 resulted in a change in rating as compared to 60% for grievances of unsatisfactory ratings that occurred from 1976 through 1982 (see Table 3).

5. The effect noted above does not extend to below average ratings as well. Eighty-eight percent of grievances of below average ratings resulted in a changed rating during the 1983-88 period as compared to 25% for grievance of below average ratings in the 1976-82 period (see Table 3).

6. There are the same number of observation/conference forms in the personnel folders now as before (average 6.1 per teacher). However, the number of teachers rated unsatisfactory in which more than three people are used as sources of documentation has increased from 25% to 50%. The number of personnel dossiers with observations/conferences only by the principal has decreased from 38% to 20% (see Table 4).

7. The percent of teachers whose unsatisfactory rating was the result of only a single critical incident has decreased from 19% over the period 1977-82 to eight percent between 1983-88 (see Table 4).

8. The number of schools in which teachers rated unsatisfactory have serving in the five years prior to the unsatisfactory rating has decreased. Over the period 1977-82 the average number was 2.6; since that time the average has been 2.2. The percent of teachers rated unsatisfactory serving in three or more schools over a five year period has decreased from 38% to 25%. Moreover the years 1986-87 and 1987-88, the only years for which there is a full five years following the increase in evaluation efforts, shows a drop (from 2.6 to 1.4) in the average number of different schools. (see Table 5).

9. Of the 109 teachers rated unsatisfactory from 1977-1988, seven teachers received a second unsatisfactory rating. Five of these seven ratings have occurred since 1982-83 and six of the seven teachers received second unsatisfactory ratings the next year. None of the seven teachers is still employed.

10. The average age of the teachers rated unsatisfactory was 42.5 years for 1977-82 and 46.6 years for 1983-87. Twelve of the 44 teachers reviewed were below 40 years of age and 32 were 40 years of age or older (see Table 1 and Figure 2).

11. The number of PRISM terms used in the documentation of unsatisfactory ratings has changed over time, showing a significant increase in 1983-84 and remaining high (see Figure 4).

12. The distribution of teachers rated unsatisfactory by organizational level of service suggests a fairly even distribution by level within regular education, but perhaps a disproportionately small number of special education teachers have been rated unsatisfactory (see Figure 3).

Summary

Analyses of the results of this study demonstrate that the quality of the documentation has improved over the years and that principals are doing more observations, that the more recent documentation is more detailed, makes use of the instructional terminology taught to principals in the staff development program, and is much richer in suggestions for improvement, since the beginning of the district's staff development effort.

In addition, the analyses of employment history revealed that a single critical incident often triggered a flurry of observations and conferences by the principal, vice principal, dean or subject area supervisors to gather supporting evidence for an *Unsatisfactory* rating. Nearly 90% of all teachers receiving *Unsatisfactory* ratings had a history of being transferred to other buildings or other grade levels within the district. Many of these same teachers received *Below Average* ratings at some point in their career and had received one or more reprimands for some infraction of rules or regulations.

Nearly all the records reviewed showed classroom organization as the single most prominent weakness of the teachers rated *Unsatisfactory*. Poor planning and methodology were always seen by the rater as the reason for *Unsatisfactory* management and organization. Only one eacher was cited for lack of content knowledge but this was added to the majorproblem of management and control of the classroom and children.

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Figure 1
Unsatisfactory and Below Average Ratings for
Ten Year Period

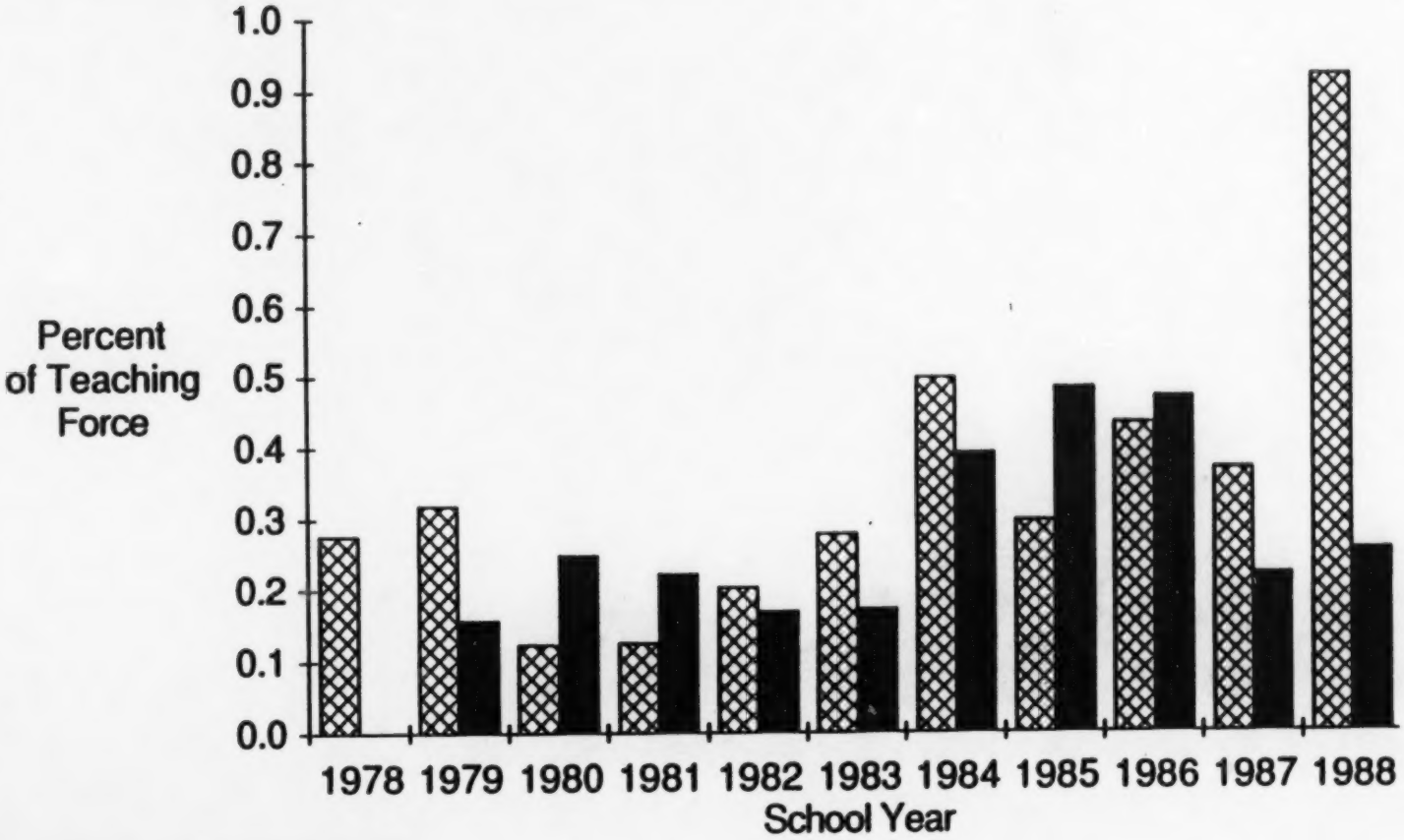


Table 1

Disposition of Professional Employees Receiving Unsatisfactory Ratings 1977-78 thru 1987-88

School Year	# Rec Unsat	Average Age	# Still Employed	Number Resign	Number Retire	Number Terminate
1977-78	9	40.5	0	4	3	2
1978-79	10	35.8	3	3	3	1
1979-80	4	40.0	3	0	0	1
1980-81	4	48.5	0	2	2	0
1981-82	6	47.6	4	1	1	0
subtotals	33	42.5	10	10	9	4
			30%	30%	27.2%	12%
1982-83*	7	46.0	4	2	1	0
1983-84*	13	45.0	7	4	0	2
1984-85	8	48.0	0	5	3	0
1985-86	12	43.4	6	2	4	0
1986-87	10	51.0	6	1	3	0
subtotals	50	46.6	23	14	11	2
			46%	28%	22%	4%
Totals	83	44.5	33	24	20	6
			39.7%	28.9%	24%	7.1%

*Note: School nurse not counted; no record of disposition.

1987-88**	26	49.4	21	1	1	0

**Note: 1987-88 distorts differences because no one on this list was on last years list. Therefore, all of them have one more year technically/legally. (Numbers do not add up to 26 - 3 teachers took sabbatical leaves).

Table 2

Disposition of Unsatisfactory Rated Teachers by Year When They Resigned or Retired

Year Recd Unsat Rating	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	Still Employ
1978	6/78											
1978	-------	1/79										
1978	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	12/85				
1978	6/78											
1979		----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1979		----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1979		----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	6/84					
1979		6/79										
1979		----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	2/86			
1980			----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1980			----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1981				----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1981				6/81								
1982					----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1982					----------	----------	----------	6/85				
1982					----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1983						----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1983						----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1983						----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1983						----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1984							----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1984							----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1984							----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	√
1984							6/84					
1984							12/84					
1985								11/85				
1985								6/85				
1985								4/85				
1985								--------	1/86			
1986									----------	----------	----------	√
1986									----------	----------	----------	√
1986									6/86			
1986									----------	----------	----------	√
1986									--------	6/87		
1987										----------	----------	√
1987										6/87		
1987										---------	6/88	
1987										6/87		
1987										----------	----------	√
1988											---------	√
1988											---------	√
1988											---------	√
1988											8/88	
1988											---------	√

Table 3

Disposition of Actions; Unsatisfactories and Below Average, 1977-78 through 1986-87

Time Period	Rating	Number Grieved	Percent Grieved	Percent of Grievance Upheld (Rating Changed)
1976-82	Unsatisfactory - 33	5	15%	60% (3/5)
	Below Average - 22	4	18%	25% (1/4)
1983-88	Unsatisfactory - 50	13	26%	15% (2/13)
	Below Average - 48	8	17%	88% (7/8)

Table 4

Number of Different People Observing and Conferencing With Unsatisfactory Rated Teachers

School Year	Prin	SIS	Dean/ V Prin	Dir	Assoc Dir	Number Obs/Conf on File	Critical Incident
1977-78	X					0	X
	X	X				6	
	X					5	
	X	X				13	
1978-79	X		X			11	
	X	X				2	
	X	X				2	
	X	X			X	7	
	X					0	X
1979-80	X					6	
	X	X				6	
1980-81	X	X			X	13	
	X	X	X			13	
1981-82	X					2	
	X	X	X			13	
	X					0	X
1982-83	X		X			5	
	X	X			X	8	
	X					0	X
	X					0	X
1983-84	X					0	X
	X					9	
	X		X			11	
	X	X	X			6	
	X	X			X	5	
1984-85	X					0	X
	X	X	X			10	
	X	X				11	
	X	X	X		X	6	
1985-86	X	X	X			6	
	X	X	X			7	
	X					9	
	X		X			16	
	X	X	X			11	

Table 4 (Cont.)

Number of Different People Observing and Conferencing With Unsatisfactory Rated Teachers

School Year	Prin	SIS	Dean/ V Prin	Dir	Assoc Dir	Number Obs/Conf on File	Critical Incident
1986-87	X	X	X			3	
	X	X	X			3	
	X	X	X			6	
	X	X				6	
	X	X				4	
1987-88	X					6	
	X			X		8	
	X	X	X			3	
	X	X				5	
	X	X	X			7	

Table 5

Number of Different Schools Unsatisfactory Teachers Have Been in Within Previous Five Years of the Unsatisfactory Rating

School Year	School Year	Number of Schools	Age
1977-78	1972-78	2	50
	First Year	1	24
	1971-76	2	57
	1972-78	6	31
	Average	2.2	40.5
1978-79	1973-79	3	34
	1979	1	25
	1979	1	22
	1974-79	1	51
	1973-79	3	47
	Average	1.8	35.8
1979-80	1976-80	4	52
	1975-80	2	28
	Average	3	40
1980-81	1976-81	1	56
	1976-81	2	41
	Average	1.5	48.5
1981-82	1979-82	4	31
	1976-82	3	60
	1977-82	5	52
	Average	4	47.6
1982-83	1978-83	2	43
	1977-83	1	54
	1977-83	2	55
	1977-83	2	32
	Average	1.75	46

Table 5 (Cont.)

Number of Different Schools Unsatisfactory Teachers Have Been in Within Previous Five Years of the Unsatisfactory Rating

School Year	School Year	Number of Schools	Age
1983-84	1978-84	3	46
	1978-84	2	47
	1978-84	3	51
	1978-84	4	40
	1978-84	1	41
	Average	2.6	45
1984-85	1980-85	2	53
	1980-85	2	33
	1980-85	2	47
	1980-85	2	60
	Average	2	48
1985-86	1981-86	4	35
	1981-86	1	60
	1981-86	4	55
	1981-86	6	29
	1981-86	5	38
	Average	5	43.4
1986-87	1982-87	1	50
	1982-87	2	54
	1982-87	1	60
	1982-87	1	51
	1982-87	3	40
	Average	1.6	51
1987-88	1983-88	2	42
	1983-88	1	40
	1983-88	1	63
	1983-88	1	56
	1983-88	1	46
	Average	1.2	49.4

Figure 2
Ages of Teachers Rated Unsatisfactory
(n = 44)

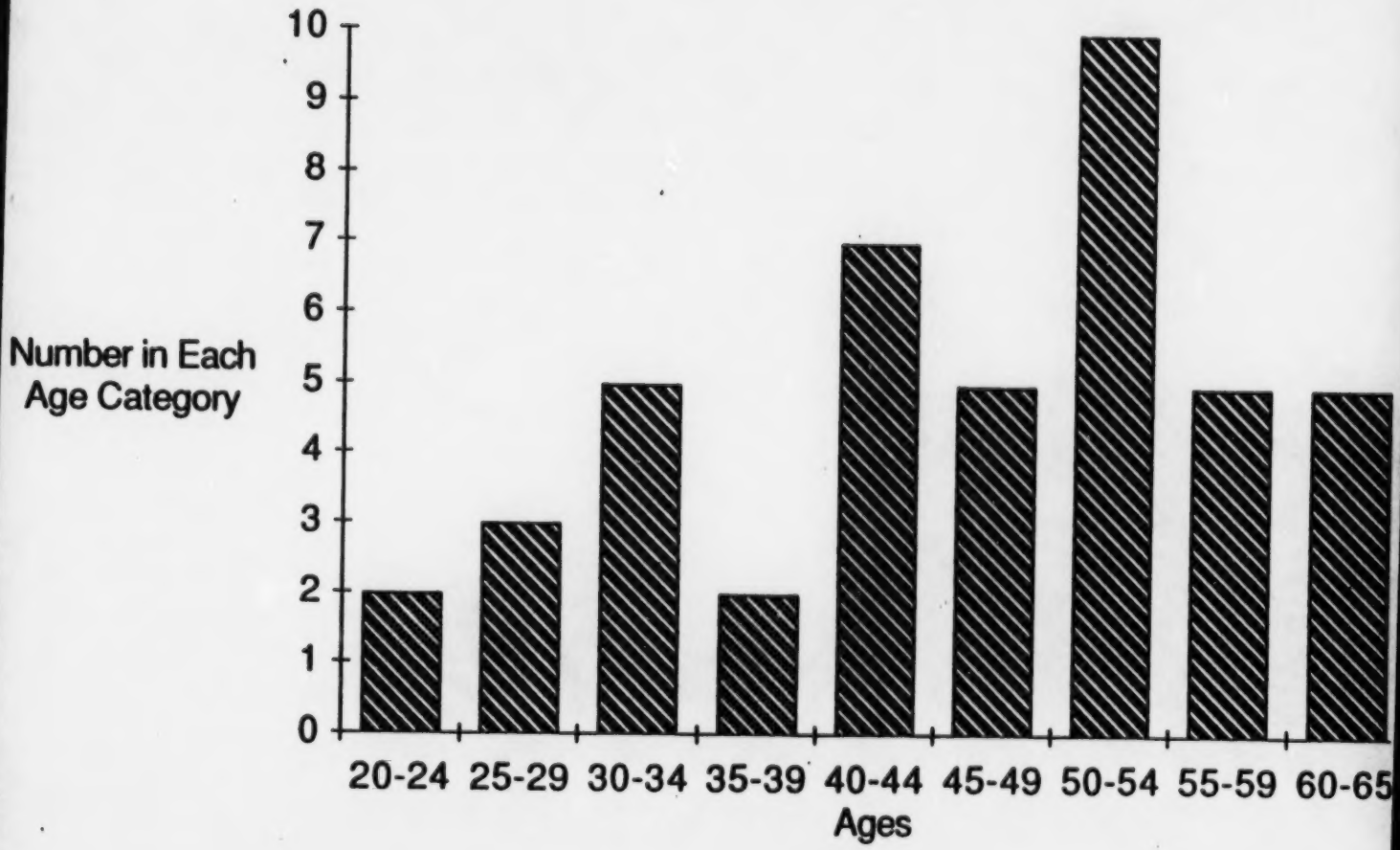
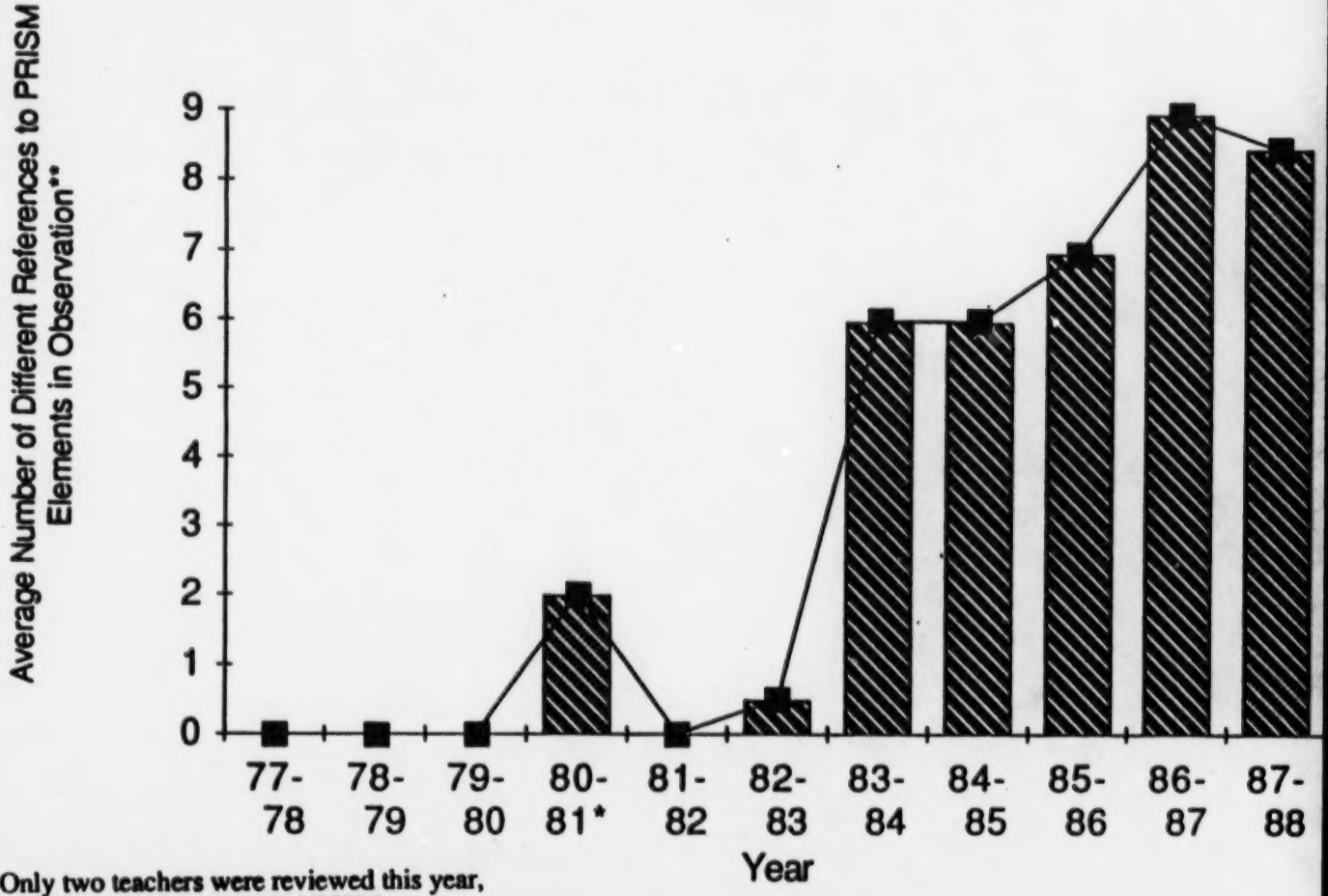


Figure 4
Use of PRISM Terms/Phrases
(Average by Years)



*Only two teachers were reviewed this year, only one file had any (4) PRISM terms.

**Obvious increase occurred from 1982-83 / 1983-84. Use of terms remained high through 1987-88.

Figure 3
Distribution of Unsatisfactory Ratings According to Organizational Level